

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Child and Family Services Agency



Administrative Issuance: CFSA-06-4

TO: All CFSA Staff

FROM: Uma Ahluwalia, Director

DATE: Tuesday, February 21, 2006

RE: Obtaining Permission for Foster Children to Travel with Resource Parents

This Administrative Issuance offers guidance to CFSA staff, contract agency staff and resource parents regarding notifying and obtaining approval for foster children to travel with the resource parent (i.e., foster parent). This framework for decision-making for social workers and resource parents regarding travel cannot anticipate all individual circumstances; therefore, a collaborative approach that considers the best interests of the child is intended.

Consent of parents, CFSA and, in some cases, the court is required for travel over 100 miles from the District of Columbia. Social workers are encouraged to request parental consent for overnight stays and travel when children are placed to avoid missed positive opportunities for children in care.

This Issuance is part of a series regarding obtaining consent for foster children to participate in overnight stays (sleepovers), travel and extracurricular activities. The other administrative issuances are:

- Participation of Foster children in Overnight Stays, CFSA-06-3; and
- Obtaining Permission for Foster Children to Participate in Activities Requiring a Signed Consent Form or Waiver of Liability, (pending).

Social workers should plan for the medical needs of the child during travel, when appropriate; refer to the Healthcare Management Policy for more information.

Contract agencies with case management responsibility are required to comply with this Administrative Issuance.

In this Administrative Issuance, the following terms have the meanings indicated:

“Parent” means the legal parent (biological or adoptive) or legal guardian of a foster child.

“Child” or “youth” means a foster child.

“Resource parent” means foster parent.

If you have any questions about this Administrative Issuance please contact the Deputy Director of Program Operations, the Office of Licensing and Monitoring, or the Office of the General Counsel.

General Guidelines Regarding Local (within 100 miles of D.C) Travel with the Resource Parent-

1. A "local trip" is travel within 100 miles of the District of Columbia.
2. A resource parent may take a child on a local trip without permission or consent from CFSA or the parent under the following circumstances:
 - a. At least one adult who is over 21 years of age will be responsible for the child at all times;
 - b. The travel does not conflict with any foster care program activity, including but not limited to meetings, therapy and visitation; and
 - c. The trip does not conflict with any court orders, including an order prohibiting contact with specific individuals.
3. The resource parent must use good judgment about whether the child can handle the trip and may call the social worker (or supervisor if the worker is unavailable) to discuss whether they should take the child on a trip as needed.
4. The resource parent must notify the social worker in advance of any local travel.. This can be done by leaving a telephone message for the social worker (telling the social worker where the child will be staying) in advance of any local overnight travel.

Non-local Travel and Extended Stay within Mainland United States-

1. "Non-local travel" means travel with the foster parent that is more than 100 miles from the District of Columbia. "Extended stay" means travel with the foster parent of any distance that lasts for more than two nights.
2. Parental and CFSA approval is required for all non-local travel and extended stay within the mainland United States.
3. Resource parents should request approval for the child to travel when they begin planning the trip or as soon as they become aware that they will need to travel, but at least 10 business days in advance of the travel. The social worker will respond within 2 business days of all requests.
4. Request for approval may be made via the telephone as long as the resource parent contacts the social worker or supervisor.
5. When making the request, the following information shall be provided by the resource parents:
 - a. The date, time and location of the trip;
 - b. The reason for the trip;
 - c. Why the trip is in the child's best interests;
 - d. The resource parent's assurance that at least one adult who is over 21 years of age will be caring for the child at all times.

Travel Outside of Mainland United States-

1. Travel outside of the mainland United States for children must be approved by CFSA and the parent or the Court. In all instances where a child will be traveling outside the mainland US, the Court must be notified.

2. The resource parent must request approval of travel outside of the mainland United States at least 20 business days in advance of the travel. The social worker will respond within 7 business days of all requests.
3. When making the request, the resource parent shall also provide the information required by *Non-Local Travel within Mainland United States*, as indicated above.
4. If there are issues with regard to payment for committed children or youth who plan to travel, the social worker should discuss them with the AAG.

Obtaining Permission from the Parent-

1. Once the foster parent has made the request, the social worker shall attempt to obtain parental consent for non-local, extended or travel outside of the mainland United States.
 - a. Parents can consent for children to travel, unless the travel is prohibited by court order.
 - b. Consent should be sought first from the parent who has been the primary caregiver for the child prior to the child's removal.
 - c. Either parent can legally consent to travel.
 - d. Parental consent is not required if parental rights have been terminated.
2. If the parent decides not to consent to the travel, the social worker shall accede to the wishes of the parent. However, if the social worker believes the parent's decision not to consent to the travel is not in the child's best interests, they may raise the issue to the chain of command. When a parent refuses permission for a child to travel and the social worker accedes to the parent's wishes, the resource parent may also raise the issue to the chain of command.

Obtaining Permission from CFSA and the Court-

1. If the social worker is unable to reach the parent, after making reasonable efforts to do so, the social worker must document those efforts in FACES prior to seeking Agency approval for the activity or trip.
2. After making reasonable efforts to locate a parent or if parental rights have been terminated, the social worker may request that the Program Manager approve the travel.
3. For travel outside the mainland United States or travel that would result in a child missing court ordered activity, the social worker shall request that the AAG seek court approval for the travel after obtaining the approval of the Program Manager.

Requesting Permission for a Foster Child to Miss a Court-Ordered Activity in an Emergency Requiring Travel-

1. If a child would miss a court-ordered activity due to traveling with a resource parent for emergency reasons, permission from the court to miss the activity may need to be obtained. For example, the funeral of a resource parent's relative may require the foster family to be away from the area on the day of the child's court-ordered therapy session or visit. In the event that the activity could be rescheduled, the social worker and resource parent will work collaboratively to ensure that the activity is rescheduled prior to travel. Some activities cannot be rescheduled; the social worker will work with the resource parent and notify the court as appropriate. The social worker will be cognizant of how frequently scheduled activities are rescheduled and raise the issue with the chain of command as necessary.

2. The resource parent must immediately request the social worker's decision whether to seek permission from the court to miss the court-ordered activity. When making the request, the following information shall be provided by the resource parents:
 - a. The specific emergency that would cause the foster care program activity to be missed;
 - b. The information required by Non-Local Travel within Mainland United States, above;
 - c. The foster care program activity that would be missed;
 - d. The date, time and location of the foster care program activity; and
 - e. A phone number where the social worker can reach the resource parent for the duration of the emergency.
3. The social worker will determine whether to seek permission from the court to miss a court-ordered activity. The resource parent may not seek court permission on her or his own.
4. The social worker shall contact the AAG to request permission for the child to miss the court ordered activity as soon as the worker has made a determination that:
 - a. The trip is in the child's best interests, (safe, enjoyable, the child should be able to cope emotionally with the situation);
 - b. The court ordered activity that would be missed can easily be rescheduled or alternate arrangements can likely be made; and
 - c. There are no apparent concerns about the safety of the location.
5. The social worker shall inform the resource parent within 24 hours of the request whether the foster child may travel with the resource parent.
6. In some cases, securing permission on an emergency basis for the child to miss the activity and accompany the foster parent may not be possible, depending upon the needs of the child and the nature of the trip. Under these circumstances, CFSA shall ensure that arrangements are made for the care of the child (respite) during the emergency. Resource parents shall work collaboratively with the social worker to ensure that the child is placed in respite.

Special Requirements for Contract Agencies with Case Management Responsibility-

1. For travel within 100 miles of the District of Columbia of not more than 2 nights, the resource parent shall notify the Program Director of the contract agency of the child's location.
2. If the trip is for more than 2 nights and/or not within 100 miles of the District of Columbia, the contract agency shall attempt to secure the consent of the parent.
3. If the parent cannot be located, the contract agency shall fax their request to the Supervisory Monitor for review and the Supervisory Monitor shall request approval from the Program Manager.
4. For travel outside the mainland United States, CFSA and the parents or the court must approve the travel. If parents cannot be located, requests for international travel shall be submitted to the Monitoring Program Manager to obtain court approval.
5. All travel information shall be entered into FACES by contract agency staff.